

CLAIMS:

1. A network (100) comprising:
a first network element (103) comprising:
means for communicating a physical characteristic message comprising information related
to at least one physical characteristic of the first network element (103); and
5 a second network element (105) comprising:
- a sensor (117) for determining physical sensor information related to a
physical characteristic of a physical environment of the second network element (105);
- a receiver (111, 113) for receiving the physical characteristic message from
the first network element (103); and
10 - means (115) for determining a physical context characteristic in response to
the received physical characteristic message and the physical sensor information.
2. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the at least one physical
characteristic comprises information of a physical property of the first network element
15 (103).
3. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the at least one physical
characteristic comprises a visual property of the first network element (103).
- 20 4. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the physical characteristic message
comprises an image of at least part of the first network element (103).
5. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the at least one physical
characteristic comprises a current characteristic of a physical signal being transmitted by the
25 first network element (103).
6. A network as claimed in claim 5 wherein the physical characteristic message
comprises a data representation of the physical signal.

7. A network as claimed in claim 5 wherein the physical signal is an audiovisual signal
8. A network as claimed in claim 5 wherein the first network element (103) comprises means for embedding a marker in the physical signal and the physical characteristic message comprises information related to the marker.
9. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the sensor (117) is an image sensor.
10. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the means (115) for determining is operable to determine the physical context characteristic by a visual detection algorithm responsive to the physical characteristic message.
11. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the visual detection algorithm is an object recognition algorithm.
12. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the sensor (117) is an audio sensor.
13. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the first network element (103) furthermore comprises a movement detector and means for updating the physical characteristic message in response to a detected movement.
14. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the physical context characteristic comprises a location of the first network element (103).
15. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the network (100) further comprises a plurality of network elements (103, 107) operable to communicate physical characteristic messages and wherein the second network element (105) further comprises means for determining a physical location map of a plurality of network elements (103, 107) in response to the physical sensor information and received physical characteristic messages.
16. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the means for determining a physical location map is further operable to determine the physical location map in response to a movement of the second network element (105).

17. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the first network element (103) further comprises means for presenting an information signal to a user.
- 5 18. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the network (100) is a partly wireless network.
19. A network as claimed in claim 1 wherein the network (100) is a dynamic network.
- 10 20. A network element (105) for a network (100) comprising:
a sensor (117) for determining physical sensor information related to a physical characteristic of a physical environment of the network element (105);
a receiver (111, 113) for receiving a physical characteristic message from a
15 different network element (103, 107), the physical characteristic message comprising information related to at least one physical characteristic of the different network element (103, 107); and
means (115) for determining a physical context characteristic in response to the received physical characteristic message and the physical sensor information.
- 20 21. A method of operation in a network (100) comprising the steps of:
communicating from a first network element (103) a physical characteristic message comprising information related to at least one physical characteristic of the first network element (103); and
25 at a second network element (105) performing the steps of:
- determining physical sensor information from a sensor (117), the physical sensor information being related to a physical characteristic of a physical environment of the second network element (105);
- receiving the physical characteristic message from the first network element
30 (103); and
- determining a physical context characteristic in response to the received physical characteristic message and the physical sensor information.